

REDEEMING THE TIME

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16).

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Photo courtesy of Jim McLaughlin



Photo courtesy of Jan Coleman

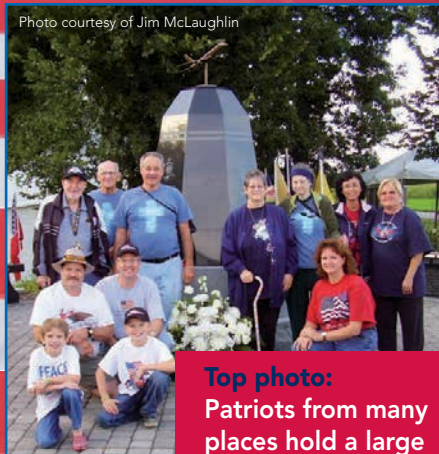


Photo courtesy of Jim McLaughlin

Top photo: Patriots from many places hold a large banner honoring the victims of Flight 93 at the site of the 9/11 crash in Shanksville, PA
Bottom photos: The Apollo, PA, Bible Presbyterian Church set up a booth and handed out Gospel literature and patriotic materials at the tenth anniversary memorial service for those who lost their lives on Flight 93 during the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The event was also sponsored by The Independent Board for Presbyterian Home Missions.

British MP: Calvinism an "Equivalence in Christianity" to Al Qaeda Brand of Islam

British Member of Parliament Rory Stewart recently appeared in a panel discussion on CNN's Global Public Square. The show is hosted by Fareed Zakaria, who formerly was a writer for *Newsweek*, and is a favorite of many in the liberal media.

The subject of the discussion on the September 11, 2011, program centered around the religious extremism that led to Osama bin Laden's murderous campaign of terror and the development of the al Qaeda network. When Stewart began to speak, he quickly announced that there is an "equivalence" to this sort of Muslim extremism in Christianity: "Calvinism and extreme Puritan rhetoric."

One would hope that Stewart was just showing an embarrassing ignorance of historical fact. Yet, he is in the top echelons of British government, diplomacy and academia. He was a tutor of Princes William and Harry, and was appointed a professor at Harvard University — a school started by Calvinists/Puritans, and named after Puritan benefactor John Harvard! He is often consulted for advice by the U.S. and other governments, after holding top posts in the British diplomatic corps in southern Iraq and Afghanistan.

Reaping the Whirlwind

The Fruit of Apostasy and Compromise in the PCUSA

BY MARK W. EVANS

The Presbyterian Church (USA) (PCUSA) is reaping the fruits of apostasy. In the early 1900s, J. Gresham Machen and other faithful servants of the Lord fought against the deluge of liberalism within the PCUSA. They knew that the vitals of Christianity were under attack and sought to return the church to Christian orthodoxy. Machen wrote in the 1920s:

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Jean-Louis Cardinal Tauran, Roman Catholic Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue; Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit, World Council of Churches; and Dr. Geoff Tunnicliffe, World Evangelical Alliance, in June 2011 at WCC Headquarters in Geneva.

Reforming Alliances

*The tragedy of compromise progresses in
“Conservative Presbyterianism”*

BY BRAD K. GSELL

In our last issue of *Redeeming the Time*, we carried the news of the meeting of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) with the apostate Roman Catholic Church and World Council of Churches (WCC). The meeting was held to unveil a joint statement: “Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct.” It contained a number of statements contrary to THE Manual of “Christian witness” and “conduct” already given to us by God — the Bible.

We further showed that the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) are part of this unbiblical alliance by their membership in the WEA. The Bible forbids such combinations that mix Bibli-

cal doctrine with false doctrine. The WEA, professing to represent Biblical Christianity, has joined with those of a different gospel. There is only one Gospel revealed in the Bible. The Apostle Paul warned: “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Romans 16:17).

Many of our readers thanked us for the article, and some even presented it to their PCA pastors, respectfully asking for an explanation. Others asked for extra copies, and much of the material was translated into Spanish to warn those in the Latin world.

In this article, we quoted L. Roy Taylor, Stated Clerk of the PCA,

who said: “Under the WEA the PCA participated in the formation of the ... World Reformed Fellowship” (WRF). Here is another unbiblical alliance. Indeed, a number of PCA leaders sit on the WRF Board of Directors, including Dr. Ric Cannada, Chancellor of Reformed Theological Seminary; Dr. Paul Gilchrist, a past Stated Clerk of the PCA; and Dr. Rick Perrin, a past Chairman of the PCA’s Interchurch Relations Committee. The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARP) is also listed as a member of the WRF, as is Dr. Ron Scates, minister in the apostate Presbyterian Church (USA).

Another WRF member is Dr. Thomas Schirrmacher, Chair of the Theological Commission and Speaker for Human Rights of the WEA (seated at the far right of the photo on page 1 of the Summer 2011 issue of *Redeeming the Time*). He has been involved in a number of ecumenical endeavors, and vigorously defends the WEA’s joining hands with the Roman Catholics and World Council of Churches.

Dr. Samuel T. Logan, Jr., a leader in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), is the International Director of the WRF. Logan previously served as President and Chancellor of Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia (which also belongs to the WRF), and was a delegate to the Lausanne Conference on World Evangelization held last year in South Africa. This conference is part of the movement begun by Billy Graham in Berlin in 1966. Dr. Carl McIntire wrote his well-known book *Outside the Gate* concerning that meeting and its tragic compromise with the enemies of the Gospel. The compromise continues. The South Africa gathering included Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches.

Presently, Logan is Special Counsel to the President and Professor of Church History at Biblical Seminary in Hatfield, PA. Biblical Seminary

was started by Dr. Allan A. MacRae and other Bible Presbyterians in 1971. Dr. MacRae is with the Lord, but the seminary has gone very far down the road of evangelical compromise in the intervening years.

As Dr. Carl McIntire, a founder of the Bible Presbyterian Church, once wrote: “You are on the wrong road, Brethren!” Instead of having a clear, uncompromising, united Biblical witness for the Word of God, with no compromise with apostasy, all of these groups in one way or another have jumped into the same pot, so to speak, and are clearly compromising their testimonies. To have any connection at all with the WCC and Rome is sin and is a great stumbling block to the sheep (2 Corinthians 6:14-17; Galatians 5:9; 2 John 9-11).

The Bible Presbyterian Church *Form of Government* states: “... no opinion can be either more pernicious or more absurd, than that which brings truth and falsehood upon a level and represents it as of no consequence what a man’s opinions are.” For the WEA and WRF to have ANY cooperation with these apostate groups, shows by their ACTIONS that they are willing to allow truth and falsehood to sit side-by-side on the same platform.

Historically, the Bible Presbyterian Church has taken a lonely stand in the steeple of American Presbyterianism. Many understand the separation which took place from the apostate Presbyterian Church (USA). At immense cost, churches and faithful followers of Christ left their denomination.

However, the stand taken against compromising evangelicalism has often met resistance. Following the onslaught of liberalism, many within evangelicalism grew weary of the battle and surrendered to the popular call for accommodation with liberalism. This mixing of truth with error produced a weak and confused church.

Virtually all of the more conservative Presbyterian denominations have capitulated to a softer stand. The Bible Presbyterian Church, the Free Presbyterian Church and a few others have been willing to take a stand against the weak and compromising position taken by the PCA, EPC, ARPC and the OPC.

Carl McIntire attended the opening meeting of the PCA in 1973. The title of his report is a warning to all who continue to moderate the separated position: *As the Years Go By: A Little Leaven Leaveneth the Whole Lump*. Later, when the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, was received into the PCA, and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church was entertain-

There are undoubtedly many fine Christians in the PCA, OPC, EPC, ARPC, and other Reformed denominations. But, the call for a united separated stand for doctrinal and practical purity is as urgent today as at any time in church history.

ing the thought, McIntire wrote a pamphlet entitled “Why the Presbyterian Church in America Did Not Invite the Bible Presbyterian Church to Join Them.” It is evident that the separated position of Bible Presbyterians in those days precluded any notion of such an invitation.

Dr. Victor Hall, missionary under The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions and founder of the Charlotte Bible Presbyterian Church, wrote a pamphlet, “The Great Presbyterian Tragedy.” Through the years, the *Christian Beacon*, the *Free Press*, and other publications carried numerous articles analyzing what was happening in these various denominations. They exposed and warned of the damage resulting from compromise within Presbyterianism. Now we see the grievous harvest.

It is true that “The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error” (*Westminster Confession of Faith* 25:5). As long as sinful human beings are involved, that will always be the case. However, the holiness of God and the purity of the church can NEVER be compromised for the sake of unity. Faith Presbytery, Bible Presbyterian Church, continues to hold to the doctrine of Biblical separation that our founders held to be crucial for the continuation of a Christ-honoring church.

There are undoubtedly many fine Christians in the PCA, OPC, EPC, ARPC, and other Reformed denominations. But, the call for a united separated stand for doctrinal and practical purity is as urgent today as at any time in church history.

The argument has been made that if we just make alliances with these various “conservative” groups, we can “help” them. However, we believe this logic to be flawed. If that is the case, let’s work with every group, and help them all! We praise the Lord that Faith Presbytery, Bible Presbyterian Church, had the conviction to graciously, but firmly, refuse to be involved in this. May it continue to be a lighthouse for those who love the Word of God, and may it be of help — free of these compromising alliances — to call all conservative Presbyterians to stand “for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 1:9). •



Dr. Samuel T. Logan, a leader in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, is the International Director of the World Reformed Fellowship.



Mr. Brad Gsell is an elder and minister of music of the Bible Presbyterian Church of Charlotte, NC, and President of The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions.

REAPING THE WHIRLWIND

Continued from page 1

“Liberalism is not Christianity. And that being the case, it is highly undesirable that liberalism and Christianity should continue to be propagated within the bounds of the same organization. A separation between the two parties in the Church is the crying need of the hour.

“Many indeed are seeking to avoid the separation. Why, they say, may not brethren dwell together in unity? The Church, we are told, has room both for liberals and for conservatives. The conservatives may be allowed to remain if they will keep trifling matters in the background and attend chiefly to ‘the weightier matters of the law.’ And among the things thus designated as ‘trifling’ is found the Cross of Christ, as a really vicarious atonement for sin” (*Christianity and Liberalism*, p. 160).

The liberals in Machen’s time labeled orthodox truth as mere “interpretations” or “theories” of Scripture and demanded that the church be broad enough to include those who deny the infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible, the miracles recorded in the Scriptures, the virgin birth of Christ, the vicarious atonement on the cross, and the bodily resurrection of Christ. They won by majority vote. However, the Apostle Paul warned: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8).

The new gospel of liberalism, originating from German higher criticism and philosophy, swept through the seminaries and eventually became the prevailing view in the American pulpit. C. Gregg Singer, in his book *A Theological Interpretation of American History*, said:

“Inevitably the historic doctrines of evangelical Christianity in general,

and of Calvinism in particular, were denied and ridiculed as the residue of an outworn theology which could have no place in modern thought and no attraction for the mind of the twentieth century. With increasing boldness, leading ministers in many larger — and even of the smaller — denominations, openly denied the great evangelical truths and, in many cases, refused to preach from the Scriptures, preferring to give book reviews, philosophical addresses and moral and ethical homilies in their place” (p. 183).

The PCUSA and most of the Protestant denominations replaced orthodox Christianity with a social gospel that aimed at the perfection

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of society rather than the salvation of individual souls. Mixing philosophy with Christianity, theologians forged a new gospel that was undergirded by the same philosophical teachings that spawned Darwinism and Marxism. The experiment has proved disastrous. Religious liberalism merged with political liberalism and produced our present national crisis.

In May 2011, the PCUSA stepped off a cliff into an abyss of moral corruption. Even unbelievers recoiled at the audacity. How could a professing Christian church endorse a sin that brought brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah? Surely, the leaders and members of such a church have read the Apostle Paul: “For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use

of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient” (Romans 1:26-28).

In the summer of 2010, the PCUSA General Assembly passed an amendment to its ordination standards. The original section stated: “Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament” (W-4.9001).

The amendment deleted the words requiring “fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, or chastity in singleness.” It also eliminated the requirement that those who refused to “repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament.” This constitutional amendment, in a denomination that has sought ordination of sodomites for many years, makes it possible for sympathetic sessions and presbyteries to ordain leaders who are guilty of scandalous sin. The PCUSA website stated, “The effect of the new language ... opens up the possibility that persons in same-gender relationships can be considered for ordination” [<http://www.pcusa.org/news/2011/5/10/presbyterian-church-us-approves-change-ordination/>].

It is tragic to witness the fruit of apostasy and compromise in the PCUSA, yet we are encouraged to know that our forefathers fought valiantly to preserve a testimony for Biblical Christianity. God's Word is still our only rule of faith and practice. We are reaping the spiritual benefits of those who courageously stood for the faith, which was once delivered unto the saints, by remaining separated unto Christ. Churches and preachers proclaiming a false gospel and stooping to justify abominable sins have led this land into a swamp of misery. The only answer is a return to the Word of God and a separated witness for the doctrines and practices revealed in the Scriptures. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). •



The Rev. Mark Evans is a minister in Faith Presbyterian Church, Bible Presbyterian Church, and is pastor of Hope Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC.

CALVINISM AN "EQUIVALENCE ..."

Continued from page 1

Equally disturbing is that neither Zakaria nor any of the other panelists challenged Stewart on this absurd assertion. Zakaria has been an informal, but regular, advisor to President Barack Obama on the situation in the Arab world.

Calvinism is a system of doctrine based on God's Word which does not advocate terrorism IN ANY WAY. To say that it is a Christian "equivalence" of the Islam adhered to by Osama bin Laden is completely defamatory and slanderous. Yet, can we really expect anything else? While

Islam is being described by the media and government officials as a "peaceful religion," and Ramadan observances are held at the White House, historic Christianity is declared to be an "equivalence" to a vile religion of murder and destruction.

Calvinism provably had an enormous influence on the foundations of American government, with the establishment in law of the unprecedented liberties we enjoy. These freedoms — officially declared by our Founders to come from God and not the government — and other Biblical

Sadly, many who hear these libels and slanders will believe them to be true. How long will it be until the true Bible believer will be considered dangerous, and then have his liberties curtailed and subverted?

principles, under the blessing of Almighty God, led to the United States' becoming the most prosperous and free nation in world history.

The media is determined to present Bible-believing Christianity as dangerous and on an equal footing with the hate-filled rants found throughout the Muslim world. Particularly from the time of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in the 1970s, when our Embassy staff was captured and subjected to abuse, the press has done this relentlessly.

The term "Fundamentalist," with its historic meaning in the United States as one who believes the teachings of the Bible as the Word of God, began to be subverted by the press to refer to the lawless and barbaric ayatollahs and their followers who had come to power in Iran. In fact, United Press International released a story carried by many newspapers right after Thanksgiving 1979. It quoted Psychiatrist Dr. Bryant Wedge, "who has prepared government personality profiles on major world figures,"

as saying: "[Ayatollah Khomeini] is being entirely consistent with the role he has occupied all his life — an Iranian religious leader." Wedge continued, "It's a little like putting a Christian fundamentalist like Carl McIntire in charge of American policy." In one sweep, "Christian fundamentalism" and Carl McIntire — who is guilty of having preached the gospel, but never kidnapping or killing anybody — were put on the same level with these enemies of freedom in Iran.

Since that time, it seems that whenever there is a crime committed by a mentally unstable Western male, the press is quick to call him a "Christian Fundamentalist." A few examples of this are news reports concerning Anders Behring Breivik of the recent Norwegian violence and murder spree, as well as Timothy McVeigh of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, and Eric Rudolph, the abortion clinic bomber. None of these men could by any stretch of the imagination be considered a "Christian Fundamentalist," but that did not stop some in the liberal press from giving them that label, and thus villifying all Bible believers.

Sadly, many who hear these libels and slanders will believe them to be true. How long will it be until the true Bible believer will be considered dangerous, and then have his liberties curtailed and subverted?

We must remember the words of Christ: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matthew 5:11,12). •



**The Honorable
Rory Stewart, MP**

The Pilgrims of New England

BY MARK W. EVANS

In 1603, when James VI of Scotland became also James I of England and Ireland, Christ's persecuted people thought their king would exercise tolerance towards them and promote the Reformation. Instead, their new sovereign was a zealot for absolute rule over church and state. Governing the Church through bishops, he pursued his goal of compromising Protestantism with Roman Catholicism. Hundreds of Puritans within the Church of England presented grievances to James I, listing innovations that had entered the Church contrary to the Bible.

The King convened the Hampton Court Conference in 1604 to examine the complaints. The gathering consisted of the Archbishop of Canterbury, eight bishops, seven deans, and an archdeacon. The Puritans were allowed only four representatives. The ecclesiastical hierarchy received great favor from the king, while the Puritans were objects of scorn. Historian Daniel Neal (1678-1743) said that the king "bore them down with his majestic frowns and threatening, in the midst of a numerous crowd of courtiers, all the lords of the privy council being present; while the bishops stood by, and were little more than spectators of the triumph."¹ James I told the protestors that they sought a Scottish presbytery, "which agrees with monarchy as well as God and the

devil." As he rose from his chair, the monarch threatened all non-conformists with these words: "If this be all your party have to say, I will make

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them conform, or I will hurry them out of this land, or else worse." Neal said, "He was as good as his word."²

Soon after the declaration of war upon non-conformists, Richard Clyfton was ejected as rector of the All Saints' Parish Church of Babworth. This Cambridge graduate was a devout student of God's Word and proclaimed a message that gathered

an assembly of believers willing to abandon the Church of England to form a separate congregation. Under English law, such gatherings were illegal. Among the followers of Clyfton was a young boy, William Bradford. Cotton Mather (1663-1728), in his book *The Great Works of Christ in America*, said of Bradford:

"When he was about a dozen years old, the reading of the Scriptures began to cause great impressions upon him; and those impressions were much assisted and improved, when he came to enjoy Mr. Richard Clyfton's illuminating ministry.... Nor could the wrath of his uncles, nor the scoff of his neighbors now turned upon him, as one of the Puritans, divert him from his pious inclinations."³

Bradford and his fellow believers found an open door in the town of Scrooby, England. A government official, William Brewster, who had assisted the Ambassador to the Netherlands, provided a meeting room in the Scrooby Manor House. The congregation gathered to worship in the simplicity taught by the New Testament. William Brewster became the ruling elder and accompanied the Pilgrims to the New World. John Robinson, a Cambridge graduate, served as their teacher and became their theological spokesman, putting into writing their convictions founded upon the Bible. Richard Clyfton was their pastor and tended the flock until old age prevented him from leaving Amsterdam to journey to Leiden. William Bradford would remain with the Pilgrims until his death in the New World, serving for several decades as their governor.

The assembly organized in 1606, and entered a covenant that would direct their steps in their journey to obtain freedom of worship according to God's Word. Although the text of the covenant is lost, William Bradford paraphrased its content in his book *Of Plymouth Plantation*:

"So many, therefore, of these professors as saw the evil of these

things in these parts, and whose hearts the Lord had touched with heavenly zeal for His truth, they shook off this yoke of antichristian bondage, and as the Lord's free people joined themselves (by covenant of the Lord) into a church estate, in the fellowship of the Gospel, to walk in all His ways made known, or to be made known unto them, according to their best endeavors, whatsoever it should cost them, the Lord assisting them."⁴

The persecutions of King James I descended upon these Scrooby Separatists. Spies informed the Bishop of Lincoln and the Archbishop of York of their independent meetings. Bradford wrote:

"But after these things they could not long continue in any peaceable condition, but were hunted and persecuted on every side, so as their former afflictions were but as flea-bitings in comparison of these which now came upon them. For some were taken and clapped up in prison, others had their houses beset and watched night and day, and hardly escaped their hands; and the most were fain to flee and leave their houses and habitations, and the means of their livelihood."⁵

In the years 1607 and 1608, they fled to Amsterdam, Holland, enduring severe trials in their exit from England. Once in Amsterdam, they joined with other Separatists, but witnessed constant bickering among their new friends. The conflicts were so trivial and distracting that the future Pilgrims relocated in Leiden in 1609. Their beloved pastor, Richard Clyfton, remained behind. John Robinson became their pastor and ably led the flock.

In God's providence, storm clouds gathered once again. When the Synod of Dort debated the teachings of Jacobus Arminius, the populace was stirred to tumult against the adversaries of the Dutch Reformed Church. One of the Separatists, James Chilton, age 63, while walk-

ing with his daughter, was surrounded by 20 youths. The enraged young men falsely believed that Chilton provided a meeting place for the Arminians. A rock felled Chilton to the ground. A doctor believed him close to death, but he survived. The physical attack caused understandable concern among the Separatists.⁶

Another incident added to the discomfort. William Brewster had obtained a printing press and used it to circulate literature concerning the beliefs of the Separatists as well as to address significant issues erupting

The Pilgrims' separation unto Christ kept them in a path leading to the New World. Their trials were immense, yet they set their faces like a flint. The Lord was pleased to bring them across a fierce sea to provide a refuge for His suffering people.

around James I and his pursuit for absolute rule over the church. Two works by the Scottish defender of the faith David Calderwood were printed and smuggled into Scotland. The king was infuriated and sent agents to find the press. They were successful in discovering its location in Leiden and destroyed it. Persecution was once again knocking at the door of the Separatists.⁷

Beyond these events, a Dutch law was passed forbidding any religious gathering apart from the established church. Although the law was directed against the followers of Arminius, the wording justified persecution of the Separatists.

The Pilgrims were also concerned for their young people, who were exposed to a worldly culture. Bradford wrote:

"But that which was more lamentable, and of all sorrows most heavy to be borne, was that many of their children, by these occasions and the great licentiousness of

youth in that country and the manifold temptations of the place, were drawn away by evil examples into extravagant and dangerous courses, getting the reins off their necks and departing from their parents."⁸

Also moving the hearts of the Pilgrims was the necessity of giving forth the Gospel. Bradford stated:

"[A] great hope and inward zeal they had of laying some good foundation, or at least to make some way thereunto, for the propagating and advancing the Gospel of the kingdom of Christ in those remote parts of the world; yea, though they should be but even as stepping-stones unto others for the performing of so great a work."⁹

The Pilgrims' separation unto Christ kept them in a path leading to the New World. Their trials were immense, yet they set their faces like a flint. The Lord was pleased to bring them across a fierce sea to provide a refuge for His suffering people. Without separation, it would not have happened. In the face of today's professing Church, seeking external unity at the expense of doctrine and holy practice, the Scriptures and history point to a better way. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (2 Corinthians 6:17). •

¹Daniel Neal, *The History of the Puritans* (Minneapolis, MN: Klock and Klock Christian Publishers), 1979, p. 395.

²*Ibid.*, p. 401.

³Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust), 1979, p. 110.

⁴William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.), 1984, p. 9.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁶David Beale, *The Mayflower Pilgrims* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald International), 2000, p. 74.

⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 75-77.

⁸Bradford, p. 25.

⁹*Ibid.*



2011 Summer Camp — Faith Presb



Most Amazing!

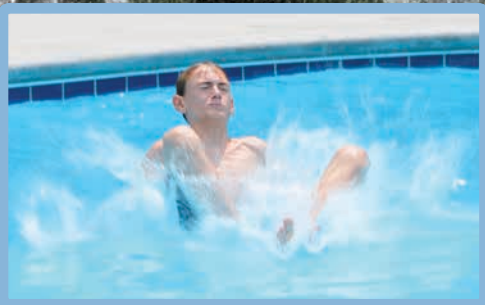
Mrs. Ruth Gensel from the Marcus Hook, PA, Bible Presbyterian Church was one of our two 90-year-old campers. All were amazed when Mrs. Gensel completed a strenuous 5½ mile hike on the Appalachian Trail and then took the zip-line the next day. On the last day of camp she was given a "Most Amazing" plaque and a Superman shirt!





bytery, Bible Presbyterian Church

Photos by Jan Coleman
and Brad Gsell



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Good Help From an Unlikely Corner

BY ROBERT W. ANDERSON

When a Christian reads Genesis 38, the story of Judah's wickedness, he may feel he needs to turn his eyes away. The sins of Judah, the fourth son of the patriarch Jacob and the brother of Joseph, make for painful and shameful reading. Still, the Bible says all Scripture is profitable. What good can come to my soul from reading about the evil that came spilling from Judah like the oil that spilled into the Gulf of Mexico in 2010? Is help for the soul to be sought or expected from such an unlikely quarter? This is not an academic question. If our own times seem Judah-like, is there any good in them to brace up and bless the soul?

If we are to profit from "Judah's story," as we will refer to it, we must not tone down the evil. We must face this sin directly, and perhaps even find it to be worse than expected at first glance.

Keep in mind the prior record of transgressions in chapter 37. Judah, already 20 years of age (which can be accurately computed from information given to us in Genesis), seems to have sold himself to do evil. Along with his nine brothers, he has been involved in hating, envying, and conspiring to kill Joseph, and in selling him as a slave.

When we break over into chapter 38, the river of Judah's wrongdoing widens and deepens; its current quickens. Judah proves the truth of the observation that sometimes the

sons of the covenant are the best examples of original sin.

Chapter 38 commences with Judah's ominous departure from the family home at Hebron: "And it came to pass at that time, that Judah went down from his brethren" (Genesis 38:1), and also from his father. The announcement of Judah's leaving the home comes without any notice of confession or repentance for his past grievous sins. His heart cannot be right. It cannot be in a state to make sound judgments. This makes us fear for him. Oh, moving away from home makes good sense to Judah. He is old enough to be on his own and he wants out. Can we see him chafing to be out from under the exacting, controlling hand of his 109-year-old father, who was

intent on knowing not only the state of his herds, but also the behavior of his sons, and that — infuriatingly enough — through the eyes of Joseph, his favorite son? Judah may have justified deserting his home, but a person of experience can see the handwriting on the wall. Judah will be away from hearing his pious father's prayers, corrections, and talk of God's covenant promises and duties. He will be away from his father's grief-lined face, a never ceasing reminder to Judah of the result of the brothers' sin against Joseph and the cover-up lie of his own concoction (Genesis 37:26,27). We have cause for anxiety that, away from godly Jacob's dwelling, Judah will harden more in sin and will throw himself in the path of influences even more corrupt than that of his brothers.

Apprehensions for Judah are justified because of those with whom he associates. Judah throws in at once with Hirah, a Canaanite, of the town of Adullam (Genesis 38:1b). Though Judah's Hebron home was no more than three or four hours' walking distance away, the moral distance between the two might as well have been a thousand miles. The Canaanites were an idolatrous and morally degenerating people. The cup of iniquity was "not yet full," but it was filling. If it is true that "evil communications corrupt good manners," what was to be expected of the effect of Canaanite manners on young Judah's already rotting behavior? If the Apostle James may be allowed to speak across the centuries, Judah made himself the enemy of God by being a friend of the world (James 4:4). The circumstances under which Judah left his Hebron home were a beginning of sorrows, but were not to be the end.

Judah's career of wrongdoing took another advance in a regrettable marriage. "Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite, whose name was Shuah, and he took her, and went in unto her" (Genesis

38:2). Marriage enmeshed Judah more intimately with the pagan Canaanites. It had been just one easy step from friendship with a Canaanite to marriage to one. Isaac had been displeased with the daughters of Canaan (Genesis 28:6) and had charged Jacob not to marry one of them (Genesis 28:1). What his grandfather forbade, the grandson would do. So quickly was there a spiritual breakdown in the descendants of Abraham! Judah's wife must have brought Canaanite customs and ideas into the marriage, which were bound to exert their morally and spiritually corrosive influence on Judah, as well as on the sons born to their union. Aside from the evil example of his father, where better than from his Canaanite mother could Er, the firstborn of Judah, have learned the wickedness for which the Lord slew him (Genesis 38:7)? Er's Canaanite wife, Tamar, was thus left without husband or child.

Judah forged ahead in moral and spiritual darkness by resorting to deception. After God slew Judah's second son, Onan, for finding a way around his duty to raise up seed to his brother, Judah misled Tamar into thinking that when his last born son, Shelah, grew old enough, he would be married to her (Genesis 38:11), so that she could be taken care of and have a child to carry on the family name. But, having already lost two sons, Judah feared to lose his third. His answer to his fears was not to repent of sin and urge the same upon his family; not to pray for God in wrath to remember mercy. His answer was more sin: Judah determined that Shelah would not marry Tamar. If he knew of the complications which deception had worked in the lives of his great grandfather Abraham (Genesis 12:11ff.) his grandfather Isaac (Genesis 26:7-11), and his father Jacob (Genesis 27), that information did not make any difference to Judah. He followed the same path of deceiving and being deceived.

Now the capstone of Judah's evil choices and doings is one of grievous immorality. Judah's wife had died, but after a time of mourning, Judah was comforted. He went out and about once more, heading off to the sheep shearing about 15 miles away. Tamar, realizing she will never have children by Judah's third son, determined to have children by an incestuous act. She veiled her face, posed as a prostitute, and positioned herself along the route Judah would take on his way to the sheep shearing. Judah did not know who she was, but he knew what she was. Judah took the bait and made his immoral appeal (Genesis 38:16), promising her a goat in payment for her services. Down in Egypt, while Joseph rejects

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the solicitations of Potiphar's wife to lie with her (Genesis 39:7,12), saying: "... how can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Judah is up in Canaan proposing to Tamar that very same great wickedness and sin against God. Judah's immorality is the black backdrop against which the diamond of Joseph's purity in chapter 39 is displayed.

What root cause accounts for the presence of multiplied wrongs? Good is absent because the fear of God is absent. There is no mention of Judah building an altar or calling upon God, as did Abraham (Genesis 12:7,8), Isaac (Genesis 26:25) and Jacob (Genesis 33:20; 35:1). Read Judah's life up to the end of chapter 38; there is no mention of God in his thoughts or speech. The absence of true religion in our man underscores the truth Charles Hodge wrote in his

Commentary on Romans (p. 45): "Religion is the only true foundation, and the only effectual safeguard for morality.... Irreligion and immorality, therefore, have ever been found inseparably connected." Practically speaking at least, Judah was evil and did evil because he did without God.

Judah's story continues with the news that Tamar was pregnant, though she had no husband. Judah was quick to judge her, convict her, and condemn her to be burned for her sin. But she produced the items of identification he had given her as a pledge at their meeting. He was just as guilty as she. And he even admitted, "She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son" (Genesis 38:26).

When we have made our way, verse by verse, step by step through the 38th chapter, we return to the question: Is it a quarter from which our souls will likely be helped? Search as we might, we may think not, yet the fact that all Scripture is profitable gnaws at our thinking. And so we double back over the ground once again, looking for tracks indicating that there is, after all, something in the chapter that will be a boon to the heart.

A thought is born: for the first time it dawns upon us that there is some "good" to be found in the Judah story in that it counters evil. God's way of telling the story of Judah strips sin of all its flashiness and pretty clothes and exposes it for what it is. The Scripture's way of telling about sin wards us off, warns us away from it. The Bible is the one place where these kinds of stories can be read without having sin glorified and its passions inflamed. God uses the story of Judah's evil to counter evil in our own thinking.

In the Judah story there are traces of common grace, which are good. Louis Berkhof's *Systematic Theology* (p. 436) defines common grace, in

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part, as “those general operations of the Holy Spirit whereby He, **without renewing the heart** [emphasis ours], exercises such a moral influence on man through His general or special revelation, that sin is restrained, order is maintained in social life, and civil righteousness is promoted.” Berkhof also speaks of “a natural course of life, which is not redemptive and yet exhibits many traces of the true, the good, and the beautiful.” The fabric of human life in the present world would fall to pieces without that common grace.

By His common grace, God saved Judah from descending into even greater depths of sin than he did. Judah did not simply move in with the Canaanite woman, as many do today, but he honored the institution of marriage and, as long as she lived, there was no hint of infidelity in Judah. That was common grace. By such light as he had, Judah did the right thing when he insisted that Onan marry Tamar, his widowed sister-in-law. It would be a Levirate marriage, which custom God later provided for in the law given to Moses (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). That was common grace.

Judah did not steel himself to the death of his sons, but was manifestly moved by his loss, and so also he mourned the death of his wife. We would have thought even less of him if he had not sorrowed. Here then is more common grace.

He showed the operations of conscience when he said of Tamar, “she hath been more righteous than I” (Genesis 38:26). Up to this point in the “Judah story,” what has there been to hint that Judah had any thought of “righteous” actions? We rejoice to find the operations of conscience in him. We attribute this to common grace.

After Tamar revealed her identity, it was remarked, “And he knew her again no more” (Genesis 38:26). Having sinned once, he might have been snared by the same sin a second time, but he was not. That too was owing to the common grace by which “sin is restrained.”

In the features of the story just noted, but for the common grace of God, Judah would have been very much worse. Small as the traces of common grace in Judah may seem in comparison to his displays of common depravity, still, for us to see it is an uplifting good for which we should praise God. There is always

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reason to be thankful that however evil men may be, they are not more evil. If they were, life in this world would be ever so much more unhappy and frightful than it is. There is this much help from an unpromising chapter — that men are held back from doing the worst they could do.

Better by far than the common grace good in the “Judah story” is the covenant good in it. God set the covenant in place with Abraham, Judah’s great grandfather. Among other temporal and spiritual blessings which God, out of His free grace, pledged to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their descendants were these: that He would be a God to them, would bless them, and would make them a blessing.

Important to the overall story of Judah is a less welcome promise to Abraham: “know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that

is not theirs,” prophesying their 400 years in Egypt (Genesis 15:3). Here in chapter 38, Judah seems a stranger to his own covenant of promise. But even when these covenant promises were not prized, or seemed far off or uncertain, they were in the course of being fulfilled.

Those covenant promises, in their time and place, had unfolded in the lives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In the life of godly Joseph (whose story intertwines with that of his brother, ungodly Judah), those promises unfurl as Joseph endures the evil of being sold down into Egypt (the land mentioned to Abraham by God) by his envious, hateful brothers. God blessed Joseph by preserving him from murder by his brothers, by preserving him through the hard years of imprisonment in Egypt, and then by exalting him to be next in power to the Pharaoh. God’s covenant blessings came to Joseph, who, while he endured evil, held without wavering to a righteous course of life.

After the well-known events of Joseph’s life had transpired, he would have cause to say to his brothers, “God did send me before you to preserve life.... God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance” (Genesis 45:5,7). Later on, explaining to his brothers that he became a slave in Egypt by God’s design, Joseph told them, “As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive” (Genesis 50:20). Under his managed grain storage program through seven years of plenty, Joseph, according to God’s covenant promise to Abraham, was made a blessing to all the nations of the earth. Thus he bore a resemblance to and was the harbinger of the future Christ, the Bread of Life, who came down from heaven to give life unto the world (John 6:33).

As Joseph showed himself a very different man from Judah, God’s cov-

enant dealings with Judah were of a very different nature from His dealings with Joseph. God allowed Joseph to be sold into slavery by a sin that was not his own; God allowed Judah to sell himself to a promiscuous mingling with Canaanites by a sin all his own. By allowing Judah to follow the course that he did, God shows the depths and dangers of sin to which a man can be carried. Then when Judah might have justly been given up to his poor choices, God, in His covenant goodness, saved him from the brink of disaster. He sent a famine, which would ensure that Judah would be taken away from the dangers of Canaan into the greater relative safety of the land of Goshen in Egypt. All we see on the face of Genesis 38 is Judah joining up with the Canaanites. But looking behind the scenes, we know God is at work according to His covenant promises and grace, and that work is unveiled in the subsequent chapters of Genesis.

We breathe a sigh of relief to see Judah snatched as a burning stick from Canaan. But what would God's temporal deliverance out of the Canaanite sinful lifestyle be worth if there were no spiritual deliverance from his personal sin? Judah's danger was not only the sins around him, but also the sinful nature within. Judah sinned against God, but God forgave him freely. In his commentary on Genesis 38:27, John Calvin observed: "... both Judah obtained pardon for his error, and Tamar for her wicked contrivance...." In the later chapters of Genesis we will see a greatly changed Judah, who acknowledges: "God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants" (Genesis 44:16); and who, in company with his brothers, sends a message to Joseph, entreating him, "Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren" (Genesis 50:17). Here is a good that brings exultant joy: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (Psalm 32:1).



FAITH PRESBYTERY, BIBLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Fall 2011 Meeting
Collingswood, NJ
September 30, 2011



Sin is the sphere in which God shows His grace. We are struck by Judah's energy and determination to sin through the whole course of Genesis 38. Sin abounds in the story, but covenant good and grace does much more abound.

The crowning goodness of God shows itself in what came from the incestuous relation between Judah and Tamar. Twins, Pharez and Zarah, were born to them. From the line of Pharez, David was born. And ultimately, "Jesus Christ our Lord ... was made of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Romans 1:4). Amazingly, years later, when Jacob was blessing his sons on his death bed, he prophesied, "Judah, thou art

he whom thy brethren shall praise.... The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come" (Genesis 49:8,10). As Matthew Henry commented: "God will show that His choice is of grace and not of merit, and that Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief, and is not ashamed, upon their repentance, to be allied to them; also that the worth and worthiness of Jesus Christ are personal, of Himself, and not derived from his ancestors. Humbling Himself to be 'made in the likeness of sinful flesh,' He was pleased to descend from some that were in-

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Glory to the Newborn King!

SACRED CONCERT

Saturday, December 10, 2011 • 7:00 p.m.

Bible Presbyterian Church
1115 Haddon Avenue • Collingswood, NJ

Organist/Pianist Brad Gsell

Featuring the Avis E. Rohrer Memorial Organ

Sponsored by the church's
Women's Missionary Society

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famous. How little reason had the Jews, whose name was derived from this Judah, to boast, as they did, that they were not born of fornication!" (John 8:41).

Though, on the face of it, Genesis 38 is not a promising quarter from which we would look for spiritual help, we hope to have found some for ourselves in our day. We see children of Christian homes growing to the age where, when they leave the home, they leave the church. They leave home to mingle with the world; they marry unbelievers. These things

sadden the hearts of God's people. Add to those sorrows the deceptions that are rampant every place in the world, as also in the church. The immorality that shows its face in Genesis 38 is mirrored all around us. Our times are like Judah's.

Though we feel sadness and dismay and decry the iniquity that abounds in society and even in the church, we are not without good tokens of common grace. When people marry without faith in the Lord, we can be happy at least that they honor the institution of marriage. When there are so many stories of hardened people who are "past feeling" and "without natural affection," we are happy that there are many who maintain loving sensibilities. Though things are very bad, we may rejoice before God that they are not worse. We are grateful for that work of the Holy Spirit, even among the unregenerate, where He promotes civil righteousness and restrains evil; but, how much more thankful we are for every work of saving and sanctifying grace. We must pray and encourage ourselves that God will grant repentance and faith among and around us. And in events to which we are exposed in our lives, may we be confident that the Lord God omnipotent reigns.

No matter how many Judahs and their evil doings there are, may we take up the hymn of Habakkuk: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Habakkuk 3:17,18). •



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